Research & Development Highlights

Socio-economic Series *Issue 2*

The Condition of Canada's Housing Stock

Introduction

CMHC requires information on the physical condition of Canada's dwellings for housing research, policy development and program delivery. One of the ways this information is gathered is by asking occupants to assess the condition of their own units and to classify them by degree of need for repair.

Since 1982, CMHC has sponsored an occupant self-assessment "need for repair" question on the Household Facilities and Equipment (HFE) surveys, which are administered as supplements to the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey (LFS). This issue of *Research & Development Highlights* presents the results that were acquired throughout the 1980s from the following question:

Is this **dwelling** in need **of** any repairs? (Do not include desirable remodelling, additions, conversions or energy improvements.)

- Yes, major repairs are needed (to correct, for example, corroded pipes, damaged electrical wiring, sagging floors, bulging walls, damp walls and ceilings, crumbling foundation, rotting porches and steps).
- Yes, **minor repairs** are needed (to correct, for example, small cracks in interior walls and ceilings, broken light fixtures and switches, leaking sinks, cracked or broken window panes, some missing shingles or siding, some peeling paint).
- No, **only** regular maintenance is needed (for example, painting, leaking faucets, clogged gutters or eavestroughs).

Findings

Degree of Need of Repair

About one quarter of Canadian households regularly report that their dwelling needs either minor or major repairs. Minor repairs have increased while the reported need for major repair declined throughout the 1980s.

	1982	1985	1987	1988	1989
Need For Repair					
• major	12.9	12.4	10.5	10.2	10.0
• minor	14.9	13.8	16.0	16.6	15.0
Regular Maintenance (no repair)	72.2	73.7	73.5	73.3	75.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Cette publication est aussi disponible en fran-ais sous le titre *L'6tat du parc de logements au Canada.*

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Need for Dwelling Unit Repair

	1982 own/rent	1985 own/rent	1987 own/rent	1988 own/rent	1989 own/rent
Need For Repair					
• major	14.1/10.9	13.4/10.8	11.0/9.7	11.0/8.8	10.3/9.6
• minor	14.1/16.3	12.6/16.0	15.1/17.5	15.7/18.0	13.5/17.4
Regular Maintenance (no repair)	71.8/72.8	74.1/73.2	73.9/72.7	73.3/73.2	76.2/73.0

Need For Repair By Tenure of Household

Need for major dwelling repair is reported more often by owners than renters. This was still the case in 1989 even though the proportion of owners reporting need for major repair declined throughout the 1980s.

Need For Repair By Age of Dwelling 1989 Survey Data

	Age of Stock (%)	Need For Repair Major	Minor	Maintenance Only
Built				
• before 1941	17.8	38.4	24.9	13.6
• 1941-1960	22.4	26.0	27.5	20.9
• 1981-1970	19.3	16.2	20.4	19.4
• 1971-1980	26.2	17.3	22.6	28.1
• 1981-1989	14.3	1.9	4.5	17.9

Need For Repair and Age of the Stock

The belief that the need for major repair is greatest in the oldest stock is confirmed by household reports. Though less pronounced, the same relationship holds for minor repair. As data show, stock of all ages is reported in need of regular maintenance.

Need For Repair By Settlement Size 1989 Survey Data

Households by Settlement Size		Need For Repair Major	Minor	Maintenance Only
	(%)			
Urban Areas				
• 100,000+	60.1	47.6	55.3	62.3
• .<100,000	23.7	26.3	25.7	23.4
Rural Areas	16.2	26.1	19.0	14.3

The Geography of the Need for Dwelling Repair

Housing stock condition varies by size of settlement and region. The greatest concentration of dwellings in need of major repair occurs in rural areas, where homeownership is particularly high. (As indicated above, homeowners consistently report more need of major repair than do renters.)

Regionally, the highest concentration of households reporting the need for major repair is in the Atlantic. Throughout the 1980s, while just eight per cent of Canada's households resided in the region, about 12 per cent of those reporting need for major repair were Atlantic households.

Household Income, Age of Head and the Need for Repair

Two beliefs are commonly held: the poor and the elderly more often live in dwellings needing repair. While the information presented here confirms the first belief, it shows the second to be untrue.

Dwellings in need of major repair are more commonly occupied by lower income households. By 1989, households of the lowest income quintile were 60 per cent more likely than those of the highest quintile to report a need for major dwelling repair. On the other hand, it was households led by the non-elderly rather than the elderly that were 20 per cent more likely to report that their dwellings needed major repair.

In conclusion, with up to 25 per cent of Canada's housing stock regularly in need of repair, appropriate investment in upkeep is critical.

Need for Major Repair By Household Income o/o

Income Quintile	1985	1987	1988	1989
First quintile	22.7	24.7	21.7	23.6
Second quintile	22.9	21.8	22.4	22.2
Third quintile	19.2	19.6	20.8	22.1
Fourth quintile	19.1	18.2	18.8	17.4
Fifth quintile	16.0	15.7	16.3	14.7

Need For Repair By Age of Household Head

	1982 ~65/65.	1985 ~65/65.	1987 ~65/65+	1988 ~65/65+	1989 ~65/65+
Need For Repair					
• major	13.0/12.6	12.6/11.4	10.8/9.5	10.5/8.9	10.4/8.5
• minor	15.2/13.4	14.3/11.5	16.8/12.3	17.3/13.0	15.7/11.9
Regular Maintenance (no repair)	71.8/73.9	73.0/77.0	72.4/78.2	72.2/78.1	73.9/79.5

The Research and International Affairs Directorate of CMHC carries out and finances a broad range of research on the social, economic, and technical aspects of housing. This CMHC Research and Development Highlight Sheet is one of a series intended to briefly inform you of the nature and scope of these activities.

For more information on CMHC housing research, contact:

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